

Incoming 11th Grade AP Honors English Summer Assignment 2011

Advanced Placement English Language and Composition: Focus Nonfiction and Essay Writing

This is a writing course. But as Walter J. Ong once wrote, “There is no way to write unless you read, and read a lot.” Thus, this is also a reading class. Rhetoric is the study of language and its potential to express our own ideas and influence other people’s ideas. Rhetoric is concerned with the artful structuring, voicing and expressing of ideas through words and sentences. In addition to being a traditional composition course that focuses on rhetoric and grammar, this class will be structured thematically as a progressive investigation of what it means to be human in the age of science and technology, what it means to be human in the virtual society of the Internet versus the physical world, what it means to hold on to what is important about being human in a future of nanotechnology, anti-depressants, cloning, avatars, one-button shopping and instant gratification...because, ultimately what it means to be human is *to be who you are*. While we are going to take this journey together as a class, and read about and discuss many possibilities, we will all learn to discover and express our own individual ideas and opinions. We will agree on some points, and disagree on others about what it means to be human. We will learn to analyze and evaluate other writer’s positions and arguments and to either refute them with our own contrasting views or to adopt, modify, and blend those arguments with our own personal perspective. We will join the centuries-old conversation about who we are as human beings and what matters most about being human, and how that is expressed as an art form in writing. Most importantly, we will learn to pay attention to what other people think, consider their ideas seriously and respectfully, and to shape our own ideas in response, using centuries-old rhetorical methods. We will learn to “hold our own” among intellectuals (including each other), especially when we are writing for an academic audience.

Required Texts (These specific texts are expected for the start of first semester):

<i>The Lost Origins of the Essay</i> by John D’Agata	ISBN-13: 978-1555975326
<i>Being Logical: A Guide to Good Thinking</i> by D. Q. McInerney	ISBN-13: 978-0812971156
<i>They Say/I Say</i> by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein	ISBN-13: 978-0393933611



Extra Credit Reading

As individuals, we can’t read everything in one summer that we’d ideally read for the discussions we are going to have in the coming year. Fortunately, we are not just individuals, we are a community. The class will form itself into a community of thinkers and writers. Each of us is responsible for bringing fresh, exciting ideas to the class discussions. The list of books below will give us a starting place of ideas for thinking about technology and what it means to be intelligent, independent, *human*. We will share the task of bringing diverse ideas and positions to our discussions by splitting up the work of reading many different works, often looking at the same topic from various points of view to understand its complexities.

Additional Recommended Texts—Choose one for fall semester and one for spring semester. One of these texts is an additional extra credit grade for the start of first semester; a second choice from the list is an extra credit grade for second semester:

You are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto by Jaron Lanier
The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains by Nicholas Carr
True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post-Fact Society by Farhad Manjoo
The Digital Person by Daniel Solove
The Future of the Internet—And How to Stop It by Jonathan Zittrain
Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto by Simon Young
Beyond AI: Creating the Conscience of the Machine by J. Storrs Hall
On Intelligence by Jeff Hawkins and Sandra Blakeslee
Infotopia: How Many Minds Produce Knowledge by Cass R. Sunstein
Idiot America: How Stupidity Became a Virtue in the Land of the Free by Charles P. Pierce
The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement by Jean M. Twenge Ph.D. and W. Keith Campbell Ph.D.
Radical Evolution: The Promise and Peril of Enhancing Our Minds, Our Bodies -- and What It Means to Be Human by Joel Garreau
The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future(Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30) by Mark Bauerlein



**Highland High School English 11 Advanced Placement Language and Composition
2011 Required Summer Reading Assignment**

Part A: Read the first 13 sections (starting with “To the Reader”), or pages 1-97, of John D’Agata’s *The Lost Origins of the Essay*. For each section, read and annotate the passage carefully. In the margins, place a star next to things you really like, a check mark next to things you agree with, a check plus for things you especially agree with, and a question mark next to things that are confusing. If you have specific questions or comments, write them in the margins. Underline or highlight the most striking or puzzling lines to bring up for discussion during the first couple of weeks of class. On lined notebook paper, choose one idea from each section and briefly explain why you chose it and why you think it is important in general, important to the development of nonfiction writing, and important to the writer who wrote it. Write about a half page response to each section. See sample below for help. Put these notes into the English Binder in the section titled Nonfiction Reading Annotations and Responses. No word-processed work will be accepted—hand-write everything.

“To the Reader” by John D’Agata

I actually want to respond to more than one thing in this section by the editor of the collection. First, briefly, I have to comment on the amazing (shocking!) marriage contract he quotes from Ra-immun. The clear dominance of men in the culture resulting in the subjugation of women is scary; I can imagine only with horror going back to a culture like that, although I know they still exist, especially in the Middle East. As a woman, I feel very fortunate to have been born to a culture in which women are generally protected by the laws equally to men. To live in a culture in which my gender is seen as sub-human, as property, would really be awful. Second, I want to respond to D’Agata’s ideas about the human impulse to express one’s self. He uses the word “compulsion” and I do think that humans created language for the purpose of expression. The human brain is complex, the human experience rich with layers of emotion, logic, and as social animals, we need to communicate. We also fear death, the disappearance of our psyches. Writing allows us to make that communication more permanent, to make our selves last beyond the life span of our biological existence. I wonder whether that is part of our desire to possibly develop a virtual persona?

Part B: Read, annotate and outline on separate, lined paper, the complete ideas in *Being Logical: A Guide to Good Thinking*. Follow the organizational structure of the book. Do not word process your outline—hand-write your work. Place this work in the section of your binder titled **Academic Literature and Rhetoric Vocabulary**.

Part C: Read and annotate *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. Complete the exercises located at the end of each chapter. If the assignment asks for an essay, simply write a paragraph. **DO NOT WRITE AN ESSAY**. Do not type your answers—neatly hand-write your work. Place this work in the section of your binder titled **Academic Literature and Rhetoric Vocabulary**.

Extra Credit Summer Reading

This part of the summer reading is optional. You will receive extra credit for doing this “Bonus” reading and it will help you be successful with some of the ideas and material during the year.

Part D: Read the nonfiction book of your choice from the list. Create an outline of the writer’s claims/arguments, summarizing his or her evidence and support. Use the writer’s divisions of chapters and sub-headings to help you track the argument. This assignment may be typed and printed. Use traditional outline format. Finally, neatly write a 500-600 word personal reflection/response explaining whether you agree with the author’s argument or not, and the reasons for your position. You might also reflect on how or why the author’s argument is effective or ineffective. This assignment will be worth substantial extra credit so take your time to do a good job. Your goal is to develop a deep sense of how the writer has proposed and supported a claim throughout the course of the book.

Hand-write all work neatly.